Dolores
Fuchina
9-7-76

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Front Cover Design - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Delores Facchina - - - -
What is Love - Melba Pierce - - - - - - 1
Wheels - Michael Markwell - - - - 2,3
Deja Vu - Nancy Lockhart - - - - - 3
Forgotten Brother - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Carl Sharp - - - - - - - 4
Warning Sign - Michaele Bradshaw - - - 5,6,7
The Mistress - David McQueen - - - - - 7
The Sole Watcher - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - David McQueen - - - - - 8
Without Work - David McQueen - - - - - 8
A Nose Problem - Karren Wonders - - - - - 9
Never Accept Rides From Strangers - - - - - - - - - Diane Yunker - - - - - - 10,11
A Short Trip Downtown - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Michaele Bradshaw - - - 11,12
A Matter of Priorities - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Pat Burke - - - - - - - 12,13,14
Harmony - Jan Jerzycki - - - - - - 14
To the loveliest girl - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Frank Mellen - - - - - - 15
the final subject for today - - - - - - - - - - - - - Frank Mellen - - - - - - 15
strike a match - Frank Mellen - - - - - - 15
autobiography of a ping-pong ball - - - - - - - - - Frank Mellen - - - - - - 15
love-starved nation - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Frank Mellen - - - - - - 15
Pay-Less Gas - Diane Dawson - - - - - - 16,17,18
My Favorite Place - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Jan Jerzycki - - - - - - 18
William J. - John Puddicombe - - - - 19
Cat in the Alley Below - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - John Puddicombe - - - - 19
One Day When I Was Walking - - - - - - - - - - - - - John Puddicombe - - - - 19
Uncle Tom's Children - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - DeDe Brenczewski - - - - 20,21
Mom: Changing Views - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Anna Mae Basarich - - - 21
Elusive Dream - Bob Shield - - - - - - - 22
Present are... - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Ross Stewart - - - - - - 22
I would say... - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Ross Stewart - - - - - - 22
Funny, laughing clown - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Jan Jerzycki - - - - - - 22
There was a girl - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Jan Jerzycki - - - - - - 22
Desert Hold - Richard Payne - - - - - 22
Proposition - Nancy Lockhart - - - - - 22
Myopia - Nancy Lockhart - - - - - 23
Exploding Passion - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Jan Jerzycki - - - - - - 23
People: Stop - Margie Sallese - - - - - 23
Back Cover Design - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - California Kid - - - - -

WORDEATER STAFF:

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Fran Brobst
John Stobart

Wordeater Awards (in prestige and $ $ $ $)
will be made at the annual Fine Arts Banquet.

THE DEADLINE FOR WORDEATER 18 is December 14.
Submit manuscripts to C 1069, John Stobart.

WHAT IS LOVE?

Love is

Love is floating on a cloud of air.

ROC THE
≡ LOVE IS A TO NOOM
KET

Love is sharing the warmth of the sun,
the wind in our face,
the leaves at our feet,
the purity of the snow.
Love is for all seasons.

Love is sharing the tears,
the laughter,
the fears,
the hereafter.
Love is for all reasons.

Love is sharing the air we breathe,
the pulse of life,
the thoughts of mind,
the touch of souls.
Love is you and me.

Love is a [illegible] motion, going [illegible] and [illegible] until you are [illegible].

Love is [illegible] and [illegible]

Love is a [illegible] pulling you [illegible]

Love is a sinking feeling.

Love is an infliction on the heart.

OT FOR
N LOS
S EVQ
I SERA
!

LOVE IS AN UPSIDE DOWN BACKWARDS EXPERIENCE!

WHEELS

Michael Markwell

Sound of wheelchair rolling.

1. Open with title superimposed over close-up still of wheel on wheelchair. Start action of wheel as title is dissolved.
2. Zoom to long shot showing young mother with new baby being wheeled to car by smiling husband and hospital attendant. Attendant stoops to admire baby one last time after mother enters car.
3. Close-up of baby.
4. Long shot of attendant waving as car pulls away.
5. Close-up of car wheel in motion.
6. Long shot of car pulling into driveway of home.
7. Medium shot as parents leave car and enter front door. Hold shot of door after it closes.
8. Wipe to same shot of door, under different lighting. Door opens and mother with now older baby exits. Mother puts child in wheeled infant's "walker", on sidewalk near door and the child rolls happily back and forth as mother works in flower bed.
9. Close-up of rolling walker wheel.
10. Close-up of rolling wheel of shopping cart.
11. Medium shot of mother wheeling cart down supermarket aisle with baby seated in cart.
12. Long shot of mother loading groceries into car and putting child in infant car seat with toy steering wheel.
13. Close-up of child's hands turning steering wheel.
14. Extreme close-up of rolling wheel of toy car.
15. Zoom back to medium shot to show child, older now, playing with car on sidewalk in front of house. He sends car rolling out of scene.
16. Extreme close-up of toy car wheel in motion.
17. Close-up of tricycle wheel.
18. Long shot of child, again older, riding tricycle from front door (right) to left of scene.
19. Close-up of training wheels on small bicycle.
20. Long shot of older child riding the bicycle from left to right and then entering front door.
21. Medium shot of front door, with still older child exiting.
22. Long shot of child getting on large bicycle and riding down driveway and out of scene.
23. Close-up of bicycle wheel.
24. Close-up of car wheel.
25. Long shot of car pulling into driveway of home. Boy, about sixteen, gets out of car from driver's side, father from passenger's side. They both start toward door.
26. Medium shot as both look suddenly off screen.
27. Long shot of young couple riding past the house on motorcycle.
28. Close-up of boy looking longingly after motorcycle.
29. Medium shot of father observing him with a knowing smile. They turn and enter door.
30. Long shot of parents happily hurrying the boy, hair mussed and wearing pajamas, robe, and slippers, out front door and to garage. Father pauses dramatically before opening garage door.
31. Close-up of youth's face, looking surprised and delighted.
32. Close-up of motorcycle in garage, with large bow and "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" sign on handlebars.
33. Medium shot of youth hugging parents simultaneously and running to the motorcycle.
34. Long shot as they excitedly examine it together. Boy sits on seat and dons helmet.
35. Wipe to medium shot of boy, now dressed, starting cycle.
36. Long shot as parents watch him ride down driveway.
37. Series of medium shots of youth riding on various streets.
38. Long shot of him approaching unmarked intersection.
39. Medium shot of car darting into intersection.
40. Close-up, youth's face with startled expression.
41. Close-up, driver's face with startled expression.

Sound of tires screeching.

42. Close-up, motorcycle wheel striking side of car.
43. Close-up, overturned, riderless motorcycle with wheel spinning in the air.
44. Long shot, ambulance rushing along street, pulling up to emergency entrance of same hospital as in scene 2.
45. Close-up of ambulance wheel as it brakes. Freeze shot of wheel. After brief pause, bring in sound of wheelchair rolling. Bring up sound as picture dissolves from still of tire to still of chair wheel. Start action of wheel.

46. Medium shot of sad-looking youth being wheeled by equally grim parents, along sidewalk to their front door.
47. Long shot of father wheeling chair up small wooden ramp and through the door.
48. Medium shot as mother tearfully closes door from inside.
49. Run credits over medium shot of closed door, while sound of wheelchair resumes.

THE END

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

DEJA VU

Nancy Lockhart

"I don't know why they have such dumb rules about registering in person", the young woman shouted through wind that rushed cold and damp into her almost numb face.

"When I get done with my apprenticeship we can say 'to hell' with this ol' Honda. You and me and our kid's gonna go first class."

"In some tacky station wagon, I suppose." The sound of her laughter reminded him of how proud he was to have such a loving wife. He wondered how she was able to tolerate this piss-poor excuse of husband. Her hands held tight around his waist as the backpack counter-balanced the fullness of her belly.

"Hey Hon how ya doin'? I'm trying to miss as many pot holes and bumps as I can. Don't want no kid of mine born in a God-forsaken city like Hackensak."

"The way I feel now, I'd welcome the idea. I'm tired of looking like a grapefruit stuffed into a banana peel."

"You're still the sexiest damn thing I ever saw!"

"Joe, I'm so cold and tired."

"Howard Johnson's isn't too far ahead. That's where you made the reservations, isn't it?"

"Oh, Joe. I thought you made the reservations!"

"Never mind. There must be a Holiday Inn somewhere close. We'll stop there."

They rode in silence for another half hour; a solitary beacon guiding them through the chilling darkness as snow began to fall.

"Shit! No vacancies. But the guy at the desk said we'd probably get a room at The Ramada over on 27."

"Joe, I feel awfully strange. We shouldn't have stopped at 'heartburn city' for lunch. Can we pull in at the next gas station? I gotta go, bad."

As she climbed off the back of the bike, she knew that what she was feeling was not to be blamed on tacos or a too full bladder. This labor was not at all like what the books said: pains starting fifteen minutes apart. Even so, delivery was imminent. She felt the warm amniotic fluid saturate her jeans. Joe yelled to the attendant for help.

The young man laid a filthy fender cover on the floor of the unheated garage. Fear, the smell of gas, grease, and his own sweat, nauseated Joe. Joe had envisioned himself pacing a smokey waiting room for hours on end, but never this. No time to think, or feel. Just be. Be for her.

Awakened to the now, Joe witnessed the emergence of a dark-haired, rosey, squalling boy...

"A son, God, how beautiful!"

Moments later the sounds of sirens pierced the tranquility. The troopers' car was greeted by a speechless attendant, who motioned the men towards the garage. There hadn't been time to phone for help.

"Sure is lucky you happened by, I been so..."

"Not lucky, man. It was weird. We seen this light by the Texaco station. Thought at first it was one of them grand opening gimmicks. But as we came closer, I swear to God, it was a U.F.O." As the stout man spoke, his partner scanned the skies, binoculars to his face. He spoke.

"Well, whatever it was, it's gone now, and I'd just as soon forget it."

Before the station attendant had a chance to report what happened in the garage, the men were through the doorway.

"Holy Christ!"

Half shy, Mary only smiled.

FORGOTTEN BROTHER

Carl Sharp

We were actually cousins, his mother and my mother were sisters. But I was raised in his house as his brother.

My older brother was dying and my mind drifted back to our youth. He was born two years ahead of me, everyone said his birth was very special, and he, himself, very special too.

I first remember him when we used to play in our father's shop. We played, but our play also involved work. Carry this, carry that, tote this, tote that. Our father owned a wood shop and my brother was very good working with the wood. Of course I wasn't. I never measured up to my brother, not that I didn't try.

I guess we got along as well as any two brothers could who were so different. The older we got the more we drifted apart.

My brother and I never had a fight. In fact, I am sure he never fought anyone. Not that he couldn't take care of himself. He was always taller than everyone else and also stronger. Even in dying he seems to have the strength I could never have.

You couldn't fight with my brother. All he had to do was look at you with those soft, hard eyes of his. There was nothing but strength in those, but also a tenderness I have never seen in anyone else.

I always felt uneasy around him. I think everyone else did too. Not that he wasn't popular. He always had people around him. Not that I approved of all his friends either. He seemed to attract hangers on.

He never had much in the way of material possessions, but he is recognized as one of the area's greatest teachers. People were always coming to him for advise and counseling. Some of his pupils said he could work miracles. I wouldn't go that far.

I guess I always resented the fact of how smart he was. When he was twelve or so he was sent off for special training and I didn't see him for four years. When he came back he was just the same humble person he was before he left. He never put on airs or threw up to us how he was able to go off for special training and schooling.

My brother liked to go off by himself for hours, sometimes days. He told me he was thinking and planning how he was going to conduct his life as if he knew how long he had to live. You know, like he knew he only had so much time to accomplish everything he wanted. When he talked like that he gave me the willies.

As far as women, I know he only had one lady friend and this shocked everyone. Not that his being with a woman was nusual but that she was a whore. To cover up for her he always used to say, "He who is without sin let him cast the first stone." I used to tell him that no one is perfect, but a whore?

My brother knew many people and many people knew him. When he was off teaching people would always come by and tell me about him, what he was doing and how he was. I guess he became pretty famous in our region. In fact he became too famous. His trouble all started when they heard about him in the capital.

Well, I told him to watch what he said when he was teaching, that the authrities would think he was a radical or something. I also think the gang he was with didn't help him any either. None of them worked, not a one. They all quit their jobs when they met my brother. I guess they figured they would live off him. Ass-holes! One of his own friends turned him into the authorities. Can you believe that?

Well, the way I see it the world doesn't deserve anyone as good as my brother. I guess the reason I felt uneasy around him is because he is perfect. A lot of people also said the same thing. Some people even said he is a god. Well, as far as I am concerned, he is my brother and I love him more than anyone I have ever known.

I don't believe he deserved to die the way he is now. Jesus, my brother, you deserve a better death than on a cross on top of an ugly hill.

WARNING SIGN

Michaele Bradshaw

My only points of reference at this time are the date, June 15, 1976, and my name, Leslie Morrison. I know the date and who I am, but where I am is a complete mystery to me. I shall begin at the beginning, since it is much simpler that way.

This morning, I decided to make that long postponed trip to my Aunt Phoeb's house. It's quite a journey, so I filled the gas tank of my little Honda at Joe's Citgo so early that the birds were just beginning to get into full chorus.

As I zipped up Highway 230, the gray, murky-looking clouds up ahead told me I was going to get wet. I figured that if I took Carleton Road, I'd make it to Maybelle's before the storm let go. I could get a cup of that mud she calls coffee and have a long gossip session while the rain blew over.

Carleton Road looked like it hadn't been graded for over a year, and the washboard was bouncing me all over. I had to cut my speed down to 35, which was lucky for me; I would have broken my neck as well as the handlebar and the gear shift cable. The bridge over White Water Creek had been washed away. After I dragged my motorcycle out of the creek-bed, I found the warning sign laying in the gone-to-seed timothy at the top of the hill.

There wasn't anything I could do but tuck the cycle under the drooping crab apple bush at the side of the road and start walking. Maybelle's was only 3 miles away. Her cousin, Bill, would come back with his beat-up, pick-up truck and get it for me. He'd charge me just the cost of the parts because he just loved tinkering with motorcycles.

I was about halfway there when the storm broke. Rain pounded like handfuls of pebbles on my helmet and soaked my sweatshirt. The whips of lightning slashing the black, rolling clouds to rags finally made me decide to take shelter under a heavily greened maple. It was a lot shorter than that old blasted pine. If any tree around was going to act as a lightning rod, I thought the pine would be it.

I was wrong. There was a tremendous crashing sound, and I looked into a shockingly bright light. I felt a muscle-jolting tingle all over, as if I'd stepped into an electrified fence under full power. There was a rushing sound in my ears, and I faded out.

I woke up to the warmth of the sun on my face. I must have been lying there for quite a while because my skin had that tight-stretched, warm feeling of beginning sunburn.

Suddenly, I sat up. I had been under the trees. I found myself in the middle of a clearing of tall lush-looking grass, silvering to the breeze. The trees were some distance away, a sort of deep green furry ridge in the distance.

There was something crawling on my leg which I absentmindedly brushed off. There was skin under my hand. This morning I had dressed in jeans and heavy brown clodhoppers, in addition to my sweatshirt and the blue metalflake helmet I had been wearing. Now I was naked as a jay-bird.

It took me a few moments to accept this as real. I tried pinching myself and slapping, but I didn't wake up. This was not a dream.

A trickle of sweat flowing into the corner of my eye woke me to the fact that I was sitting out in the sun and slowly roasting. I got up and started walking towards the line of deeper green which marked the forest.

As I strode towards the beckoning shade, I began to look around. Something was missing but I couldn't figure out what. There was the sun, trees, grass, even some pink and white star-like flowers dotted here and there. And there was insect life in plenty, hopping around my feet, landing on my arms and in my hair, and whizzing and droning all around me. Sounds, that was it -- no bird calls.

I stopped and looked around. There was a flash of jeweled wings to my left. No, that was just an enormous butterfly. I listened very hard. I heard the insects' flit-hop-flit, the high hum of a small winged thing, the heavier vibrations of bees, and the wind rustling the grasses. There were no birds. Where on Earth are there no birds?

I continued on towards the trees which were much closer now. They looked different from ordinary trees. There was one with shaggy hanging bark like a cinchona, but the leaves were tiny flat needles like a hemlock. The smooth barked ones, that looked like beechwood, had enormous fan-shaped leaves wider across than both of my hands spread.

I was rather wary of stepping into this strange woods, but the heat of the sun was overpowering. I stepped slowly into the cool, damp, woodsy-smelling shade.

I began to feel more at ease as I walked further into the woods. Not only was it more comfortable traveling here, but I was beginning to feel the need of something to eat and drink. I continued to walk very slowly because I was fascinated by the many strange types of trees, and because I was barefoot and have had some experience with sharp tree stubs and snaky, looping roots.

I was venturing through a particularly heavily grown area, when it occurred to me that I had not been scratched or lashed by any branches or twigs. I hadn't even had to push aside any low hanging limbs, yet I was walking through a very overgrown place. Having been raised in the country, I do know how to

walk through the woods taking the easiest routes automatically, but I was walking through a thicket. The young trees were not more than 12 inches apart anywhere. I turned, looking behind me. I could not discern my back-trail.

I took another step forward. There was no sound but the movement of the trees and leaves. I took another step, and I saw it. The branches were parting in front of me. They separated gently, almost soundlessly with no stripping of leaves or snapping of twigs. I felt like Moses stepping through the Red Sea.

As I walked through this strange woods with its self-manipulated branches, I began to think: People are always saying that plants have feelings; that they can hear and are sensitive to emotions. This forest seemed to be just a little further up the evolutionary ladder than the plant life I was used to. What would have happened if I had just gone barging through; shoving, crushing, twisting, and breaking? The trees react to me, protecting themselves by moving out of my way. If I had attacked, would they have defended themselves?

My explorations into profound thought were interrupted by the beautiful sound of running water slapping and chuckling over stones. I followed this delightful music to a clear little brook with short, heavily-laden trees leaning over it. After quenching my thirst and further refreshing myself by indulging in a splash-bath, I began to speculate on the advisability of tasting some of that interesting looking fruit which dangled so enticingly over the stream.

The fruits looked like elongated plums. The colors varied from a marroon to dark violet. By reaching up and gently squeezing, I discovered that the dark colored ones were softer. I gently tugged at one piece, and it left the branch easily. The smooth skin smelled so much like cinnamon and apple, I could not resist. I ate several and hoped that I hadn't made a mistake and poisoned myself.

After some consideration, I decided it would be better to continue walking and try to find some people or a place to to spend the night, as the sun seemed to be throwing longer shadows than it had earlier. I went uphill to try to find a vantage point from which to view the country around me. Making my way through the co-operative brush, I discovered I was being herded in a different direction from the hill I wished to climb. Each time I turned toward the hill, I found myself slowly being edged around in one specific direction. Eventually I gave in. So far no harm had come to me by compliance. Possibly there was a reason for this guidance.

Presently, I found myself in another thicket. Some of the trees here were twisted in torturous shapes as if deliberately bent in their youth into gigantic claws digging into the ground.

Something flapped under one of the handlike formations. Thinking it was an animal, I looked closer. It was a ragged piece of dirty cloth hooked over a collection of white bones. A cross-strap of ancient, cracked leather spanned the skeleton midway up its length. A knife, blunted and nicked lay in a cluster of tiny bleached bones which must once have been a hand.

I could make no identification of this skeleton. The being appeared to have been approximately 5 feet tall. The skull was elongated -- at least 15 inches from front to back. The 6 fingers were about 7 inches long, and the 6 toes were of equal length. It was like no creature I had ever seen before.

This exhibition explained the absense of birds and animals which had puzzled me. All major animal chains of life begin with plants being eaten. These plants would not allow themselves to be so abused. The insects went unmolested simply because of their small size, and, possibly, because of the fact that they stayed out in the clearings, for I had not noticed the grasses reacting to my presence in any way. These beings had stumbled into a trap; they had injured the trees, and the trees had reacted.

As I followed the line of twisted trees, avoiding the sight of their captives as much as possible, I resisted thinking too strongly upon my own fate had I not been blessed with an interest in the unusual and the loss of my shoes. I continued following the path created for me by this living wood and came out in another clearing.

This clearing was not covered over in grass as the other one had been. There were only a few scraggly, sickly-looking clumps. The ground was glossy and black. In the exact center, stood a tall sleek-looking, pointed silver tower, a space ship. It had to be that. This was how these beings back there had arrived. This was how I would leave, must leave.

I have explored the ship and discovered that the former owners must have had some manner of communications problems similar to those of our affluent society because there are little pictures stamped on all the buttons, switches, and handles. The meanings are quite understandable. The only problem I can forsee is with the color code. The color red indicates "safe" or "ready-to-go", the color white indicates "warning", and a blue register is "neutral" or "not-in-use".

I still have no idea of my whereabouts. The charts are printed in the alien language and I cannot find a solar system containing a yellow sun and 9 planets indicated on any of them. Therefore, I will be forced to proceed on a trial-and-error method.

Since it is highly unlikely that I will ever see Earth again, I have decided to write this manuscript and leave it in orbit around this planet. I have

discovered a container which seems designed to leave messages or possibly to call for assistance. In any case, I shall enclose this manuscript and leave it as a warning in the hope that someday someone will find it.

TO: 1st Commander -- Star Sector 27B
FROM: Explorer Ship, Valhalla II

Sir,
The preceeding message was found circling the 4th planet of the sun Y-326 -- your sector. Please advise course of action.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

THE MISTRESS

David McQueen

Beneath the gentle sea
quietly living like the dawn,
I rest as a silver fish,
too deep for the fires of the air
but so near the light which fills
the ocean like a fog.

Luckless memories move apart,
flitting away into a forest of dark willows,
out into the heavy rain -- blown away
like couples lost in a rain-filled garden.

I am barren, a comet swept island;
your touch, formed from the sky
drifts down to me.
Awake! Awake!
Awake! my darling poet.
Leave your fire baths, and we
shall divide the castles from the beach
and slay the dragons of the sand,

to finish in the calm of our bodies
gently rocking beyond our rooms
in the silver fields of the moon.

"These stars are too fixed to let us be;
come to me and the cooling sea!"

David McQueen

THE SOLE WATCHER

Streets netted
by long shadows,
deep, incomparably deep,
like gaping canyons
in the ocean's floor.

Street lamps half-dimmed
by a lolling mist
like a tired old man's
unwiped eyes:

There are people, too,
in overcoats, indefinable
like a bad water color.
Their speech is trapped
within their hollow mouths
like tidal pools caught
on a broken stone strand.

The shadows cover me
like a woman's hair
over half closed eyes.
By seconds,
they accept the mist's weight
expanding till they empty
from my sight -- alone:

This world slips, comes
crashing down into the shadows.
I am alone, sole watcher
of its disengaging form.

WITHOUT WORK

It is early, and the tavern
is quiet: I sit alone
at an outside table. The odor
of gin hangs on my breath
and moustache. No one
will share it with me
or share these little tables
or this view of strangers.

A little girl, skirted in fire engine
red, in tow with her mother,
brushes the iron rim of my table;
her mouth keeps repeating to the hand
that clutches her tight: "I'm old
enough...old enough...old enough."
In my head, I chant back, "for what,
for what, -- for what, little girl?"

My glass has been emptied of gin,
and the tavern has filled
with a midday crowd.
Through its iron doors, a closed
fist of noise is on guard;
whereas, here, at my table,
the palm is open and quiet --
a desert to be avoided.

It has become my pleasure
to sit without drink,
to sit quietly and meekly --
no thoughts, no words,
just an emptiness -- of sorts.

A NOSE PROBLEM

Karren Wonders

When I was eight years old, I didn't always want to play baseball, but when you have a brother who is three years older and bigger, sometimes you just play anyway.

There was one day when my brother, Warren, wanted to practice hitting. He needed someone to catch the ball or at least chase them, and when he looked all around, and then finally down, he usually saw me.

He threw the ball in the air and then hit it. I did my best and got the ball back to him as soon as I could. One time, he kept throwing the ball in the air and missing it. He became angry, and I became bored. The sun was in my eyes, but I didn't think that it mattered because he wasn't hitting and I usually didn't catch anything. I saw him swing, the hardest ever, then I saw the ball make contact. I saw the sun and the next thing I saw were stars. I knew night couldn't come that fast, but there I was flat on my back with stars dancing in my eyes.

I could hear Warren's voice asking if I was all right. I used to get hurt a lot when I was a kid and someone always asked if I was all right when I didn't appear to be all right.

When the stars faded, I answered that I didn't think I was all right. I thought the blood coming from my nose would have told him that, but I told him anyway. I sat up and took a fast inventory of my body. Everything seemed in order except for my nose that I didn't have to look down to see. I imagined it to be much larger than my mother said it was.

For some reason moms always seem to have ready access to such people as, in this case, an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist. The next thing I knew, I was in the car and on the way to a place where a man would tell us if my nose was broken. I remember thinking that having a broken nose was really going to be "cool" when I went to school. It would draw crowds from the whole school, not just my class, and I would be famous.

Up the elevator we went. The doors opened and we walked up to a door with lots of names and big words on it. I was still feeling a little smug. On the other side of the door, however, were creatures from another planet. My heart and I sank into one of the big chairs. Nose casts!? I never before in my whole eight years saw anybody with a nose cast. I thought that I probably never saw anybody because if they weren't here, waiting for the doctor, they were home locked in their room until the cast could come off. I wondered how they got to the doctor's office and decided that they must have a hanky over their nose pretending to blow their nose all the way here.

Oh, how I wished I had hurt my eye. The people with eye patches looked so much neater than the people with casts on their noses.

I told my mom I thought I felt better, but moms don't always believe you when you want them to. Finally, after about a hundred hours or so, my name was called. I pushed on my nose in an attempt to make it smaller, but it did hurt.

The examination was over and the doctor said I had a crack on my nose that he thought would heal in place without an effort on his part. Whew, no cast.

I decided on the way home not to tell anyone about anything that had happened. Little did I know I was already getting two black eyes that would eventually turn: blue, green, and yellow, in that order.

When we got home my brother was in the yard waiting. I thought it was nice that he was glad to see me. (I also thought about how long he would have laughed at my nose cast.) However, he wasn't waiting because he wanted to see how I was. He was proud of the fact that after I left he took some paper and marked the place where I was laid flat and also the place where the ball landed after bouncing off my nose. He was really impressed as though it was a new world record or something. I didn't think these markings were all that impressive until two days later when the boy next door found them interesting. At least I had something to talk to him about and for some odd reason, this made the whole experience worthwhile. You see, he didn't know I could play baseball.

NEVER ACCEPT RIDES FROM STRANGERS

Diane Yunker

I find myself in this position quite frequently. As I lean back in the recliner, my eyes are focused solely on the portrait above the mantle. My only daughter -- I was so proud of her! I see her blissful eyes and her bobbing pigtails cheering at the football games. I see her diligently studying for her classes, unyielding to interruptions. I see her sincerity and I feel the vibrations I had felt symbolizing our closely-knit family.

Towards the end, I saw her turn from a self-confident teenager to a mind-boggled woman. My love for her will always live in my heart although she may no longer live in my home.

Linda was a pretty eighteen-year-old girl attending Markland High School. There she was intelligent, and was popular with many of the kids as well as the teachers. Friends knew they could trust her with their darkest secrets. That night was to be the first cheerleading practice. I let Linda use the car, although I knew the engine had been acting up lately. She had promised she would go only to school, then come directly home. I trusted her as I always did, and she could sense this trust. The rest is all a memory that only time could erase. Only Linda just didn't want to wait.

She was driving home, and approximately two miles from our home, the car died. She tried in vain many times to get it started, before deciding to walk the rest of the way. As she walked along, an older-looking man, maybe in his late forties, pulled over in a shiny cream-colored L.T.D. He rolled down his window and Linda could automatically feel her knees shaking. "Hey, would you like a ride?" the man asked.

"No, thank you. I only have a little way to go." Linda replied, feeling the quivering in her voice.

"Hey, aren't you...uh...Linda Fasznu?" the man asked.

"Yes, how do you know?" Linda questioned. "I'm a good friend of your father's. Now let me just help you out by giving you a lift," he replied.

"Oh, I guess it will be okay. I am pretty tired after practicing for two hours," Linda said, trying to convince herself it was really all right.

"Sure, now hop in," the man replied. She hesitantly seated herself in the car. He tried making small talk with her, but she bluntly answered his questions. He drove a bit slowly, but very observantly. They reached 164th Street and Linda stated, "Here is my street."

"I'll just be a minute. I have to get gas before the stations close." It being only 8:30 and no station around closed until ten, Linda knew something was strange. She felt an impulse telling her to dive out the door. She knew it was no use, though, because he kept turning to her and making small talk. They passed up station after station and when she inquired why, he simply stated that it was cheaper up ahead. Soon he turned down a dark bumpy gravel road and Linda started shaking.

"Where are we going?" she screamed.

"Just a little further," he calmly answered.

"No, no! I want to go home!" she frantically screamed.

"In just a little bit," he answered, this time a bit of anger in his voice.

"No, now!" she screamed.

Suddenly he pulled off the road and started tearing at her clothes. She screamed and struggled and beat him helplessly. At long last she was able to get a grasp of the door and she jumped out. Her clothes torn, and half off, she ran through a rugged field, the man close on her heels. When she felt she was a short distance ahead of him, she stooped down and scooped up a fairly large rock and whirled it at him. It hit him in the head as Linda ran towards the highway. She turned around once and was able to make out a shadow in the dark of a body lying, arms clasped over his head. She could hear a faint moaning as she ran.

Upon reaching the highway, she went to a gas station and went in the washroom to straighten out her clothes. Looking in the mirror, all she could see was filth. No, the tears on her face weren't from fear of the man. They were from worry of how everyone would accept the situation and treat her, but more importantly how she would treat herself. She knew her father and I would be upset if she told us, so decided she would keep it to herself, not tell a soul. She would just tell me the car stalled and she had a bad fall while walking home.

The next day at school Linda was quiet and wouldn't even look at her boyfriend, Dave. It seemed like everyone at Markland knew she had something troubling her. So many people asked her what it was, and it made her feel good to think so many people cared. Yet, she felt she just couldn't let it out that she had been raped. She felt like bursting out in tears so many times, and in her last class when the subject of pregnancy came up, she felt she could no longer keep it within her. After class she met her best friend, Kathy, and spilled out the whole story, all the while crying and hugging Kathy. She was very sympathetic to Linda and told her she should let it out. But Linda said she just couldn't, she was humiliated enough as it was. After school when Dave offered her a ride home, she declined saying her mom might object. Dave seemed to understand, but oh, how she hated lying to him! When her bus pulled up in front

of her drive, she was greeted by four policemen and my trying to hold back my tears. Kathy had told! How could she? She got off the bus and I ran over and hugged her, only wishing the burden on me instead of her. She told the story time and time again, and when she told them she left him in the field, the police drove to the field, and there he lay unconscious. He was brought to the hospital with a major concussion.

Soon the court day came, and it was all over that Linda Fasznu -- the pretty, popular girl, had voluntarily subjected herself to rape. She wondered how her true friends could believe that. Since that night she could no longer look any of her friends in the eye, knowing what they were thinking. In court, Linda was harrassed from the defense. Why would she allow him to drive her to the road? She went into hysterics when the judge ruled not guilty.

After court, Linda went even further into her shell. She began to dress shabbily, not caring how she looked on the outside. Dave had stopped calling her after she snubbed him off for a couple of weeks. She didn't care how her grades were, and she frequently missed school. Soon she quit the cheerleading squad, saying it was too much for her. She stopped calling her friends, and rarely went out. She would walk around the house quietly, trying to force a half-smile. It was like she was dead and her body was haunting my house.

Upon returning home from work one day, I walked in the house calling for Linda to help me carry in the groceries. After receiving no response to my calls, I climbed the stairs to her room and slowly turned the knob. I peered inside, and there she lay. The empty bottle which had contained tranquilizers prescribed to her for her nerves lay next to her. Atop her cold body rested a note. It read: "I love you Mom, and Dad, but I cannot face myself with all this filth in me. I had a very happy life and thank you for everything. Please always remember I love you. Love and kisses, Linda."

Her soul had died five months before and now her body had joined it.

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A SHORT TRIP DOWNTOWN

Michaele Bradshaw

All right, Nitwit, now put the car into neutral to start it and shift into reverse. You know it always stalls when you start it up in park.

Now back out slow. Look twice that way, you missed one coming from there and almost totalled the car last time. Lucky he was a good driver. You're doing fine.

I wish he hadn't insisted I go downtown today. He knows how I hate driving in traffic -- rush-hour traffic especially!

There goes a ball across the road. Where's the kid? Ah, there he is; somebody took the time to teach him well.

Let's open the window and get a bit of fresh air in here. Beautiful, beautiful breeze on my face! I love this bit of road: curves and more curves, like a ribbon, and trees hanging over to keep it green-shaded and peaceful.

Stop sign -- Look both ways. Okay, it's all clear, onward to the "ant heap."

Maybe there's something on the radio.

"Record-breaking high today of 100°, with an 85% chance of rain."

You're telling me! My dress can't decide whether to stick to me or to the seat. I hate it when the air lowers at you saying, "I'm going to rain all over you." Threats, threats. So let go and rain!

I wonder if that light will stay green long enough -- no such luck.

"Leaving on a jet plane..."

Don't know when I'll be back again. Flying, high up in the clouds. Drizzling rain misting on my face. Drifting in huge, lazy circles spiralling slowly down, down...

Oops! There goes the light. Let's keep our mind on the driving, girl.

First I have to go to the bank. Did I make out the deposit slip? Right, $60 cash out and all the rest in.

Another red light! I'm having no luck at all today.

Nice dog -- you'd think the owner would have sense enough to crack the windows before he left. The poor thing will smother in there! What kind of a dog is it?

Ought to get a dog for the girls. Matty is old enough to take care of one now. Maxi has imaginary animals all over the house. Maybe it would be a good idea. Poodles are supposed to be the smartest. Maybe a cockapoo would be better. They don't have to be clipped.

There goes the light.

Yeow! Look out, lady! You almost clipped my fender right off! What's the matter with you; in a hurry to get to a funeral? City drivers!

There's the bank. Surprise, surprise, there's no line. Terrific! Pull up to the window; careful you don't get too close. That's right. Drop in the check and checkbook.

"Have a nice day!"

"You too." Nice old lady; she

never forgets the kids. Well, I guess they can have the suckers after supper. A little extra treat never hurt anybody.

Now for Al Kolze's.

Rats! Another red light!

I wonder how much they want for that dress? Sure is pretty; looks like a dish of lime sherbet, cool and floaty. Probably way overpriced.

Get off my back bumper, Jerky! You'll end up mashing in the grill of that pretty new Cadillac. Maybe if I tap my brake lights a few times... That's better!

They've changed the sign. I almost missed the store.

Aah! Air conditioning!

"One stick of the smoky cheese and one of sausage. That will be $9.68.

There goes another "tenner". Oh well, it'll keep him happy and he's much easier to live with that way.

"68, 70, 75, and 10. Thank you."

Wow! It's like stepping into a blast furnace! There's no air! I'll just get home and crawl into a nice cold shower.

"Hot town, summer in the city, back of my neck feeling dirt and gritty..."

I don't need that! Why did I turn that noise-box on in the first place?

This heat's shimmering everything. Mirages on the road ahead; I wonder why they always fade when you get near?

There's my turn, half a mile to go and I'll be in my shower.

Sheesh! Look at that truck! The guy must be drunk; he's all over the road. Accident looking for a place to happen. Oh God!

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A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

Pat Burke

I grabbed my toothbrush from the bathroom cabinet and threw it in my overnight case. I could hardly sit through a whole day of school, I'd been so excited about tonight. We all were. We'd been passing notes all day between (and sometimes during) classes.

Friday night slumber parties were absolutely the best, and tonight's was at Diane's house. The ones at her house were always the most fun. We had the whole basement game room to ourselves and her parents never came down to check on us or tell us to keep it quiet.

A horn sounded outside. I called a quick good-bye to my parents and shut the door on their usual chorus of "have fun, behave yourself, and be home early tomorrow."

Nancy's dad was behind the wheel and Nance sat up in the front seat with him. There was a round of giggly "hi's" as I hopped in the back with Tina. "I love your coat, Denny, is it new?" Tina asked. "Yeah," I said. "My mom bought it for me 'cause I managed to pull a B in geometry." Sometimes I think we knew more about each others wardrobes than we did about our own. We always noticed when someone had something new.

Mr. Richards stopped in front of Diane's house and told us not to do anything he wouldn't do as we piled out of the car. "He's so corny," Nancy said as we started up the walk. "I think he's sweet," I said and she rolled her eyes but I knew she was kind of proud.

Diane's older sister, Ellen, let us in on her way out. She was the Senior Homecoming Queen this year and we all looked up to her as if she weren't quite human. She said "Hi" to all of us and "That's a terrific coat, Denise," to me. I felt like I'd won a prize. We all watched her run to the driveway where her boyfriend, a college man home for the weekend, was waiting.

"Are you guys gonna moon in the doorway all night?" It was Diane standing on the stairs leading down to the rumpus room. We giggled and followed her down the stairs.

Michelle, Pam and Cyndee were already there, sitting on the carpeted floor going through record albums. We dropped our sleeping bags and cases in the corner of the room and joined the other girls on the floor.

We talked about school and what a drag all our classes were. Cyndee asked me wasn't English just too too boring today (we were in the same class). I agreed even though it was my favorite subject and I secretly loved the class.

I felt so close to all of them at that moment. I wanted to tell them how proud I was to be one of them. We were all important. Michelle was vice president of the Sophomore class. Cyndee had been the Sophomore attendant to the Homecoming court. Pam, Diane and Tina were three of the six sophomore representatives to the Student Council. Nancy and I were on the cheerleading squad. We belonged to the right clubs. We were on the right school committees. We knew the right words, and the right walk and the right clothes to wear. It was a heady feeling even if we never had to say so. That would be bragging.

"Where are your parents tonight?" Nancy asked Diane. "They went to that corny Winter Wonderland Dance at the Elks Club with another couple," Diane answered. I remembered that my mother had been trying all week to get my father to go. He wouldn't, though, he always hated those dances.

"They went with the Aubrens," Diane continued. There was a short pause and then Cyndee said sharply, "Well, I hope the Aubrens took their darling Donna with them." Donna Aubren was not one of our favorite classmates. None of us really knew her that well. She'd been in home room with Diane and me last year and we talked to her sometimes. She'd seemed alright then; a little bit on the mousey side.

That we all disliked her now was a matter of loyalty. Loyalty to Cyndee. See, last October Cyndee's boyfriend, Scott, had broken up with her and started dating Donna. Scott was a Junior; handsome and popular, he and Cyndee were a perfect match. They'd been going steady for almost six months when for no reason at all he dropped Cyndee and started going with this nobody. It just shocked everyone. Cyndee hated Donna ever since, you really couldn't blame her. We couldn't anyway, so we hated her too.

"No, the Aubrens aren't taking Donna with them," Diane said quietly. "She's coming here." I thought she must be kidding for a minute but then she went on. "You guys, Cyndee, I'm sorry but there was nothing I could do, my Mom forced me into it. She said as long as I was having a party and Donna was in our class I should invite her too. I told her that we didn't get along with her and I wouldn't ask her to come for anything. Then she said that it was too late to do anything about it now 'cause she'd already told Donna to come."

Diane looked close to tears. I broke the silence. "Well, she's not here yet and it's nearly 9 -- she's probably not coming. She probably knows she's not wanted." Diane was shaking her head. "She's coming, she had an 8 o'clock piano lesson and her brother's bringing her over as soon as she's finished."

Diane was looking at Cyndee now, waiting for her to say something, maybe to storm out of the house. Instead Cyndee smiled and patted Di on the shoulder. "Don't worry about it, toots, everything's going to be fine. Now that I think about it I'm almost glad she's coming over. This could be fun..." The way she said it I knew she had some little idea working in the back of her mind. I started to feel a sense of anticipation. I knew we were in for an exciting evening.

"What are you planning, Cyndee?" whispered Pam as the doorbell rang and Diane got up to answer it. Cyndee answered, "Never mind, you'll get the idea. Just watch me."

Diane came back down the steps a few seconds later with Donna following behind her. As usual Donna wasn't dressed quite right. She was wearing a long-sleeved blouse with a button-down collar tucked into her jeans. The jeans were all wrong. Brand new levis that hadn't even been washed yet! All of our jeans had the soft, faded look that you could get at Foxmoor's for $23.99. Donna did have a pretty face though, I had to give her that. Her hair was okay, too. Light brown and cut very simple at chin length. She wore glasses that didn't do a thing for her. They were the real small, square, wire-rimmed granny glasses that no one wore anymore. Not that there's anything wrong with glasses. Pam wore them almost all the time but hers were the new over-sized tortoise shells. They looked really cute on her.

There was a round of not-too-enthusiastic "hi's". Just when I started to worry about one of those long, uncomfortable silences Cyndee jumped in and said, "Donna, you're just in time. Denny and Nancy were about to show us a new cheer that the squad made up." Well, Nance and I just looked at each other, we'd never said a word about any new cheer. Cyndee said, "Come on you guys...show us." It was then that I got an idea of what she was trying to do so I whispered to Nancy as we got up, "Let's do Go For A Victory." It was a new cheer that we'd put together for basketball games. We stood in the middle of the room and began. It was a very short, very lively cheer. I must say we put on a pretty good show of enthusiasm considering the circumstances.

After we'd finished Donna clapped right along with the others. Cyndee said, "That was just great, you guys... it must be so much fun to be a cheerleader!"

Now I knew I had the right idea. Cyndee wanted to make it perfectly clear that Donna was a nobody. She wanted to make sure Donna knew it so we were going to flash all our honors and accomplishments in her face. I knew what the game was now and I thought Cyndee had to be practically a genius to think of it. I wondered how many others had caught on.

In a minute I knew that at least Diane had because she suddenly jumped up saying, "I'll be right back" and headed for the stairs. In a minute she returned with a big packet of pictures from FOTOMAT. "I almost forgot to show you these, Cyndee. My mom finally got the last of the Homecoming pictures developed. Wait 'till you see them. You look just great in the parade and at the dance. I swear my mother took as many pictures of you as she did of Ellen." We passed the pictures around. Pictures we'd all seen at least a dozen times. That didn't matter, though; Donna had never seen them. Finally after studying them all Donna said quietly, "You looked very beautiful that night, Cyndee. So did your sister, Diane." That was all. It was enough. Just those few words reminded Cyndee that Donna had seen Cyndee that night. Donna had gone to the dance with Scott.

It was Tina's turn to make a contribution to the game. She turned to Michelle and asked, "What happened at the class officer's meeting today, Mickie? Did you decide anything on the Valentine's Day Dance?" From that point on the ball really started rolling. We asked each other about Student

Council meeting; talked about Pep Club rallies, the swim team, the school play (Diane had the lead), the school newspaper, NHS. We talked about every imaginable activity that we were now or ever had been involved with. When we finally covered every possible area and it looked like we'd said everything there was to say, Cyndee took the final plunge.

"Oh Donna, by the way, what's new with the Science Club?" There was the heaviest silence I'd ever felt. Donna slowly answered, "I'm not in the Science Club, Cyndee." Well of course she wasn't in the Science Club. I don't know how it was at other schools, but at Wimberly High the Science Club was the pits. There were only about 12 people in it to begin with and they were all real losers. Scrawny boys with bad skin and glasses. Overweight girls that smelled like Biology class. That's what I always thought of when somebody mentioned the Science Club. "Oh no?" Cyndee said just as slowly. "For some reason I thought you were."

Donna got up and walked carefully over to where she'd left her overnight case. She picked it up and said, "I'm sorry I can't stay, Diane, thank you for inviting me." Diane sounded awfully nervous when she said, "What do you mean you can't stay? Didn't you tell your parents you were spending the night?" "Yes, I did," said Donna, "but don't worry, I'll tell them I got sick or something. You can't really expect me to stay here the rest of the night." "And why is that?" Cyndee asked coldly.

Donna said, "Come on, Cyndee, I'm just not that stupid. I know what you, all of you, have been doing tonight. You made your point. I'm not the likely candidate for the most popular girl award. I don't belong to all your clubs or run for offices or do cute little cheers on the basketball court. You know I don't dress or look like one of you. What you don't know is that I couldn't care less. I don't want to be like you. That's kind of hard to understand, isn't it? You're so used to being envied. Well maybe there are other things I find more important than going to the next Pep Club meeting."

"And I suppose Scott's one of those more important things," Cyndee said. "That's right," said Donna, "he's a person, he's not some damned club! I'll bet you still don't have any idea why he broke up with you, do you? Well I do. He couldn't compete with so many other things for your time. You know when he first asked me out I couldn't believe it either. I mean, why me when he had you? You were so pretty and everyone knew who you were. It used to bother me so much I finally asked him. You know what he said? I'll bet you don't. He just said you were too damned tough to get an appointment with." She turned and walked up the stairs. In a second I heard the front door open and close.

We were quiet for a long time. Tina said, "the bitch," but there wasn't much feeling in it. Cyndee didn't say much of anything. In a short while we changed into our pajamas and climbed into the sleeping bags we'd spread out on the floor. There wasn't the usual hour or two of gossip and confidences. It was strangely quiet.

I lay awake in the dark for a long time. I kept thinking about my own boyfriend, Gregg. Whenever I had to break a date because of cheerleading practice or a meeting or something he'd always shake his head and say, "Okay, little Miss Extra-Curricular Activity." I always laughed when he said it.

I thought about that lying in the dark, thinking of all Donna had said ...little Miss Extra-Curricular Activity ...for the first time I wondered just what it was he meant.

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HARMONY

Jan Jerzycki

They tear at each other with words full of pain,
purposely wounding again and again,
Then turn smiling love-filled faces toward all
as co-hosts of this year's charity ball.
They despise all their neighbors, their relatives more,
and she adjusts price tags at every big store.
In his climb to success he cares not who gets hurt,
and she talks on the telephone dealing out dirt.
Keep spoiling their children with things they'd not had,
then wonder why the kids seem to turn bad.
They uphold the idea, brotherhood of man,
by hurling minority insults whenever they can,
Yet on Sundays they go where all good Christians meet,
parade up the church aisle, into the front seat.

Frank Mellen

To the loveliest girl
yet unseen --
I know you're out there.

laughter like wine,
the kind to get high,
poured like miracles
upon
the populace.

grace like thunder.
moves a snake
so slithery
and I will personally kill it.
and I like snakes.
but I like you better.

full of surprises
to keep your attention.
I salute a woman.
There is a difference,
you know.

the wine must age
to be mellow.
even though
pop
is nice sometimes.

the final subject for today
or anyday
for that matter
except payday
maybe
-- is dreams.

that's right.
those things we all have
I've discovered.

well, keep 'em close, kiddies.
and close the TV.
they'll be all you have
when you get older.

believe me, all else is gone.
without a dream
you're dead.

strike a match!
and curse the darkness.
for reaching back
and summoning
us from the day.

autobiography of a ping-pong ball

after we've played the moon
-- bounced high over horizon --
it begins to pale
and vanishes before noon.
happens all the time.
darnedest thing you ever saw.
must be something about the sun
that makes it go away.

slap shots are the best,
drilling it just inside the white line
watching helpless come all over your opponent's face.
the worst part is being broken and stepped on.
but you have to lose once in awhile,
it seems,
even though you've never started winning.

The game is over
and life isn't that much different.

love-starved nation!
I am one of you.
man only does it for fun--
and isn't that just dandy!

the only hitch?
man doesn't do it enough.
speaking only for myself
of course!

don't want you to get
the wrong idea.
horniness is in the eye
of the beholder.

it is my contention
that sex is here to stay.
this pearl of wisdom
comes to you courtesy of a long, clean
and tedious life.

it is a monster gentled by love.
and I can't think
of a better way
-- to meet someone.
if you aren't yourself then,
where are you?

PAY-LESS GAS

Diane Dawson

Cyrano Theopolis Brown had always slept in pajamas but he'd never had a robe.

The bathroom was down the hall, "Three doors to the left", the landlady had said, and Cyrano didn't know whether to go as he was or to get dressed first to take his morning shower. He decided to get dressed.

The small green steamer trunk in the corner of the room was still packed with Cyrano's belongings and he sorted through the neat stack of clothes to find a clean pair of shorts. The pair he pulled out were carefully patched with a small white and blue square of material that instantly drew his thoughts to his mother.

He was filled with a great sense of loss, one so powerful that he could literally feel it deep within his chest. In his mind's eye he could see her as clearly as if she were standing right there in the blue and white dress. She'd made it for special occasions, like going out for Easter dinner or New Years Eve. She was pretty but plain, and the years had made her pleasantly plump. She hadn't always been fat, she'd remember aloud to Cyrano: "Why, when I was young and thin back in 1956 they had a summer stock play in McCullem. I tried out for a small part in the play and got it."

But even more important was her meeting of the lead actor, Alexander Theopolis. Their sweet if not brief relationship that summer resulted in Cyrano Theopolis Brown, and it was that event that destroyed her youthful figure forever. "Not that it mattered," she would conclude, "because Alexander moved on with his travelling play never to find out he'd left a son in McCullem."

Cyrano's only knowledge of his father was the picture that sat on their television set back in McCullem. It now sat on the small table next to the bed in his newly-rented room. It was a black and white high-gloss theatrical picture with "All my love to Mary, Alexander Theopolis" written across the breast of the suit.

Cyrano picked up the picture that could have been of himself, the eyes deep, black and penetrating. He had high cheekbones and a finely chiseled nose. His jaw was firm and square. His father looked almost aristocratic in his handsome, double-breasted suit. Cyrano had always admired the picture and he often tried to imagine what life was like for his father, but his capacity to imagine was limited by his lifetime in McCullem.

Cyrano glanced at the clock, seven o'clock, and his new job at the Pay-Less gas station started at eight. Cyrano hurried down the hall, fully dressed, to shower and get ready for work.

"All's I want you to do today is pump gas. Think you can handle that, kid?"

"Sure," said Cyrano to his new boss, Red Moberly. He had known Red from down in McCullem before he'd moved to Center City and bought his own gas station. Cyrano had never had many friends really. The women used to gossip about his momma for having a child in sin; she was only good enough to do their laundry and cleaning. A few of the men of McCullem were always friendly enough though. Momma always had a bottle of beer and a sympathetic ear. More often than not though, they just came over for a little conversation, and maybe to make up for the way the women in town treated the Brown family.

The children of McCullem didn't accept Cyrano any better than the women tolerated Mary. All too often Cyrano would come home with his ears still ringing with "son of a bitch" and "bastard." They made fun of his name too. Even the little kids used adjectives like "sissy" and "queer" when describing him. They hurt Cyrano, but not too much. Somehow he knew his momma was a good woman and that he'd leave the horrid town of McCullem forever.

Cyrano appreciated Red's coming to Momma's funeral and offering him a job at the gas station. He smiled pleasantly at the customers and listened carefully to their orders of "$3 regular" and "Fill it with lead-free." It didn't take much concentration and after a few hours of washing windows and pumping Pay-Less, he knew it was not the kind of job that he'd want to do for the rest of his life. But it was a job that got him out of McCullem.

Around 2:30 a red Fleetwood pulled into Pay-Less. The young woman behind the wheel was beautiful. Her skin was the color of lightly creamed coffee, and as she turned to Cyrano, she flashed him a Colgate smile.

"Hi there," she said. "Five dollars regular, please." Cyrano started up the pump and began washing the windows of the Fleetwood. Inside, the car looked like a blur of shiny brown arms and faces all moving around and laughing together. A blue-grey haze filled the car and rolled out open vents along with a pulsating music urging people "To get up out of your seat, and mo-ove to the beat, Just dance, dance, dance."

Cyrano must have been staring because one of the girls in the back seat with short, short curly black hair and big hoop earrings turned and looked him right in the eye.

"Well, hey! What's a gorgeous hunk like you doing workin' in a place like this?" Everyone turned to see and the music was turned down about thirty decibels.

Cyrano was speechless. He felt the blood rush to his cheeks.

"Oh [illegible]

the front seat who also had short, short black hair. As he turned to face him, Cyrano noticed three small gold hoops in his right ear. "Please," he spoke again. "Don't pay any attention to our friend, Lawanda. She's a dear and we love her, but sometimes she can be a little ummm..." His eyes grazed the sky as though he were looking for the proper word to appear in the air. "Tacky" he concluded.

"Really, I didn't mean anything, especially the hunk part," Lawanda said. "Really, I'm sorry if I embarrassed you."

Cyrano began smiling then and glanced over to the pump in time to see $4.56 coming up and going fast. He was glad to go around to the back of the car and get his wits together. There hadn't been many black people in McCullem, certainly never any like these people anyway. Cyrano was touched by their concern about his embarrassment. And they were wildly, blatantly beautiful. One of the girls in the back had a pierced nose and gold wires wrapping around the upper edge of her ear. They looked so happy, so wild, so free. Cyrano was definitely impressed.

"What's your name?" asked the girl with the Colgate smile as she handed the five to Cyrano.

"My name's Cyrano Theopolis--" He stopped quickly, deciding to drop the Brown from his name. Too plain, he thought. "Cyrano Theopolis."

"You're kidding, that's wild!" said Colgate smile.

"Really wild!" said Lawanda from the back seat. "Wilder even than Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman."

"There you go again, Lawanda," said the three-earringed man in front. "You're being tacky again. I'm sorry, Cyrano. Forgive us?"

"Cyrano" said Colgate smile. "What are you doing tonight? I'm having a little set over at my house. Why don't you come? I live on Second Street."

Cyrano was stunned. That beautiful black woman was inviting him to her house, to a party! There was nothing he wanted more.

"Thanks anyway," he heard himself say, "but I'm new in town. I probably couldn't even find Second Street." Well, that was it; he'd blown it.

"Well, what time do you get off work? I'll pick you up myself." Cyrano couldn't believe all those gleaming white teeth.

"Well," he said dropping his eyes, "I don't even have a change of clothes with me."

"Oh, shit, is that all? Now come on, what time do you get off the gig, so Saundra will know when to pick you up?" the earringed man asked. Then he added, "You know, you really are quite striking."

Cyrano shook his head, not believing what was going on. "I get off at five."

"Far out. I'll be here at five then, all right?"

"Far out," repeated Cyrano and the Fleetwood glided from the station like a dream.

Five o'clock finally came, then ten after, then quarter after. They weren't coming. Cyrano was debating whether to feel dejected or relieved. He had walked about a block from the station when the red Fleetwood pulled up beside him.

"Cyrano! Sorry we're late. C'mon and get in the car. The party's already started," Saundra said.

Cyrano climbed in the back seat. There were only three people in the car now, Saundra and the earringed man in front, and Lawanda in the back seat with Cyrano.

"Oh, by the way, my name is Saundra. This is Tyrone, and I guess you already know Lawanda."

"Here, have a hit." Tyrone turned in his seat and handed Cyrano a hand-rolled cigarette. Cyrano could easily enough guess what it was, Mariuana. He'd heard about it, but he'd never really tried any before. He drooled with the first hit.

"Yeah, the good stuff will make you do that," Tyrone laughed. "Go ahead and finish that number, Cyrano. I know you need it after working all day."

Cyrano pulled on the joint and felt his head get lighter with every drag. The music blaring from the rear window speakers seemed to surround and engulf him, and it was not a bad feeling at all. He had forgotten where they were going when Saundra pulled up in front of a brownstone apartment. Everyone tumbled out and up the stairway.

"I'm sure I've got some jeans to fit you" said Saundra as she gave him a little pat on the rear. She opened the door numbered 416, and the small group was greeted by about a dozen people.

"Reading my Tarot Cards again, huh?" said Saundra, walking over to the kitchen table. "What good news do they have for you this time? I swear, you're the only person I know who turns up the Joker and reads it as a new friend. Speaking of new friends, I'd like you to meet Cyrano. This is Louise, a local witch."

"Oh, I'm a good witch, honey. Don't worry," she said to Cyrano before putting her concentration back into the cards.

Everything seemed strange but excitingly tempting to Cyrano. A sweet smell filled the air and the rythmic music vibrated so that he could feel it through his shoes. He could see some people dancing in the other room. A gorgeous blond girl was bumping a tall black guy in his thighs with her bottom. There were two other couples, both black, one a man and a woman, the other two men who were dancing better than anything he'd ever seen on American Bandstand.

"Here, the pants should fit you, Cyrano." At the sound of his name, he came out of the daze he had seemed to

slip into while watching the people dance. He saw the pair of pants she held out to him and realized she was handing them to him.

"Thanks, where can I put these on?"

"My bedroom's right through there, feel free."

"He followed the direction of her arm to a big, beige bedroom featuring a large round bed.

Cyrano sat on the bed thinking of everything he'd experienced in the fast half hour. He'd gotten high, met a witch (was that really true?). He remembered the beautiful sight of the people dancing so free, and thought of how they accepted him. And he laughed a relieved laugh that released all the tension and newness that he'd held in so long.

As he pulled off his pants, he glimpsed that small blue and white patch and again thought of his mother. It saddened him that she'd spent her life in a town that scorned her. McCullem was all she knew, so McCullem was where she stayed.

Cyrano vowed to himself to know more in his life, much more, so he pulled on the jeans and joined the party.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

MY FAVORITE PLACE

Jan Jerzycki

When I was young, as young could be
there was a favorite place for me.
With a tattered spread and Mom's clothesline
I'd build this favorite place of mine.
The sides were held with heavy bricks
while the corners were fastened with pounded sticks.
A few treasures brought in to fix it in style
And I was content to remain a while.

Some days my place was a mining camp,
especially good if the weather was damp.
Then the driveway puddles held gravel of gold
And the back porch, the general store, where my treasures were sold.
Mom was head cashier and would take my pail
and weigh it out on the bathroom scale.
Then she'd fill my list of needed stores
and off I'd trudge to mine once more.

There were times when a glamorous star I'd be,
and my favorite place became Soundstage 3.
Wearing lace tablecloths and Mom's old clothes
I'd strike a melodramatic pose.
The love scenes were played with my teddy bear, Lou.
He was good, though at times he'd miss his cue.
As I strolled up the walk, Mom would chuckle and laugh
and rush up to me for my autograph.

Other days I'd pretend a teacher to be
and would gather my pupils in front of me.
A ragdoll, and Lou, and a faded old clown
sat captive and listened to each alphabet sound.
Oh, I could be stern when one misbehaved, and I'd
catch Mom watching as I ranted and raved.
But if they really tried, though learning was slow,
I'd reward each one with an Oreo.

My favorite place brought me hours of fun,
but soon Mom would call, and my day'd be done.
I'd fold all the clothes and pull up the sticks,
take down the spread, and put back the bricks.
Then stacked on the porch, out of the way,
my favorite place waited 'til another day.

John Puddicombe

WILLIAM J.

William J. blew into town today
Over an ocean of salt on five inch heels
His six foot frame seemed shrouded in malice
As he told the writers they deserved to be hungry
Said to the artists they deserved to starve
Advised the ballplayers "You deserve to lose"
And counciled the old people they were to die.

William J. rode the wind at night
Damning the sun to eternally burn
Cursing the stars forever to shine
Proclaiming with mirth the earth's spinning fate
And announced that the moon must always stand still
"The night" he decreed "shall be nothing but black"
"Though the lot of the day is to always bear light"

William J. passed into my life one time
Set a blight on the crops
Put a pox on my friends
Sent a spectre to haunt me
And drew bags 'neath my eyes
He giggled as he walked away through the rubble
Then granted my life though I can not say why

William J. will run into a wall someday
Built from the pity of those that stopped crying
Those he has injured, conquered, and cursed
Ones that can look past their anger and rage
To see him for the small, cruel wretch that he is
Perhaps William J. shall die on that day
Though another will come to take up his place

CAT IN THE ALLEY BELOW

He's black, and stands out well
Against the city's dull gray
His tail a stump
Severed by some unknown accident or act of cruelty
Cruelty, most likely
His reflexes are quick
He knows the ground, the crevices, the corners
Better than I should ever care to
He's a citizen of the street
With a mind that's always on edge
He'll dance to the feline rhythms of this city
Until he dies
And is no longer seen from these balconys high above

ONE DAY WHEN I WAS WALKING THROUGH THE PARK: I SA

One day when I was walking through the park I sa
A man sitting there, crying
So I sat down near him and said
"Would you like a stick of gum?"
The question suprised him but he said, "Yes."
We discussed the weather and the election and
the World Series
Over Juicy Fruit

DeDe Brenczewski

UNCLE TOM'S CHILDREN
by Richard Wright

Wright's tales depict the condition of the Southern Black American in the 1930's and '40's. The language is simple, unadorned English which unfolds human emotions of the most primitive and sensuous nature. Wright giftedly shows the violence, the oppression, the constant warping of spirit, the hatred and fear that have crippled our nation. Emphasized is the savagery to which men, both black and white, are propelled because of the curtains of doubt, ignorance, and fear existing among them.

In the first story, "Big Boy Leaves Home", the theme is escape; however, it is not premeditated or willful. It is escape from imminent danger, the white man. What starts out to be a carefree afternoon for four young Negroes turns into a nightmare as the result of a white man's over reaction to an alleged offense.

The division between the races is shown simply and without subtlety:

> "'NO TRESPASSIN',' read Lester.
> 'Know whut tha mean?'
> 'Mean ain no dogs n niggus erllowed,' said Buck."

Therefore, the killing of the Negroes had little more meaning than killing a dog.

"Down by the Riverside" shows a character who will also inevitably flee for his life. The central character, Mann, obviously symbolic, has killed a white man, but evokes sympathy from the reader, because he has done so in order to save others. His plight is doomed even before his heroic effort to save his accuser's lives. He is turned in without mention of his commendable efforts and is shot to death trying to make his escape.

In "Long Black Song" the Southern Negro, Silas, does not attempt to flee after he has killed a white man.

Silas embraces the idea of the American Dream in an effort to win respect in his white dominated community. However, the unfaithfulness of his wife, Sarah, with a white man, finally awakens in Silas the hatred for whites that he has suppressed throughout his quest for success:

> "The white folks ain never gimme a chance! They ain never give no black man a chance! There ain nothing in yo whole life yuh kin keep from em! They take yo lan! They take yo freedom! They take yo woman n then they take yo life!"

Silas' plight is no better than his brothers mentioned before even considering his determination to fight. He is hopelessly out-numbered.

In "Fire and Cloud" a thread of Southern Christian hypocrisy is uncovered when Preacher Taylor, who is black, is beaten by white vigilantes and realizes that the town's white minister will offer no assistance, though they both preach the same gospel. However, in the end, the Negroe's religious organization becomes the springboard for social action. Taylor must separate his religious goals as a preacher from his social obligations as a man, so that to him, "the people gotta be real as Gawd." Once done he can lead his people against their oppression. Joining him in his endeavor are members of the Communist party. His resolution is to stop being passive and to speak up for his beliefs. His beliefs are that all blacks must stand together. He sees this unity as even more important than the support that will come from the Communists. This is shown toward the end of the story, when his son Jimmy, says: "'Them Reds wuz right.' Taylor replies 'Ah dunno...But let nothin come between yuh n yo people. Even the Reds can't do nothin if yuh lose yo people.'"

In the last story, "Bright and Morning Star", the idea of organized Negro-white protest is overshadowed by the idea of Communist vs non-Communist. Marxist ideology is strong in this story. The Marxist vision offers the Southern poor an element of hope for the resolutions of their problems.

The Negro "hero" is once again murdered, but the deaths take on a new meaning because they die secure in the belief that the cause for which they have given up their lives will some day be realized.

The main character, Aunt Sue, displays a mediocre, somewhat dubious, faith in the redeeming powers of Christ. Wright causes this character to transfer her faith from spiritual considerations to social concerns. Russell Brignano states, "Wright does not ask his Southern Negro figures to deny their religion; instead, he pleads with them to place their hope for a better life in social action, not in prayer."

Aunt Sue dies having the last laugh on her enemy:

> "Yuh didn't get whut yuh wanted! N yuh ain gonna nevah git it!"

The last paragraph of the story sums up Aunt Sue's long-sought freedom:

> "Focused and pointed she was buried in the depths of her star, swallowed in its peace and strength; and not feeling her flesh growing cold. Cold as the rain that fell from the invisible sky upon

the doomed living and
the dead that never
dies."

There is little a reader can do but sympathize with Wright's Negroes and loathe and despise the whites.

Frank Mellen

god is a gambler.
you have been bet
for a better world.
should god lose
who does he pay?
who's god's god
or doesn't he have one?
the ball is still spinning.
we may win yet.
since we have nothing to lose
that hasn't already been lost before
by someone else,
on this blue planet of blackness,
speeding to infinity.
where we will know.

YES, I KNOW

Karren Wonders

Yes, I know we shared the ocean
and the water that seemed blue
We also shared our thoughts and dreams
but that was nothing new.

Yes, I know your arms are warm
as they reach out to me.
How will you understand that
it isn't meant to be.

Of course I do get lonely
being far away.
But you can not hold an ocean
and you could not make me stay.

I run from those who love me
all who know me know it's true
We had our time together
and now I run from you.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

MOM: CHANGING VIEWS

Anna Mae Basarich

Does one ever remember one's mother as being young? I know I don't. To me, she seemed to be eternally middle-aged! Same prim hair style, same conservative clothes, same "old-fashioned" ideas. The only thing that seemed to change, as the years went by, was my attitude towards her.

She was the center of my life when I was a small child -- She took care of my hurts, provided the love and rules I needed, told me stories, and baked me cookies. I was oblivious to what she wanted from life. Was she happy? What were her worries, her fears? She was still young -- I never noticed.

As a teenager, there was so much we disagreed about. I was hungry for independence and wanted to be treated as an adult. To me, she seemed to be thwarting everything I wanted to do. I resented her strict authority, and a personality clash resulted. Were there any personal clashes in her life then? Was she beginning to feel her youth ebbing away as I was growing up? I don't know -- I never noticed -- She seemed the same to me.

As a young married, I began to realize she was wiser than I had thought. She was there to answer all my questions on keeping house, on cooking, on running a budget. Was she by now bored with housework and cooking? Did she long for a change in her life? I was too busy to notice -- She seemed the same.

I'm older now and have assumed the role she has had these many years -- that of being a mother. She's aging. And now it's apparent! Gray has replaced her fiery red hair. Her inner fire is becoming passive.

I'm her confidante now. I hear her worries about getting sick, about running out of money, about dying. Her days are lonely, and I'm busy and can only do so much -- She's not the same anymore. Sometimes I wish I didn't notice so much.

ELUSIVE DREAM

Bob Shield

It was late. Very late. Only one light lit the small room in which Matt sat. A bed and a chair by the door, which Matt occupied, was the room's only furnishings.

Matt sleepily looked at the clock hanging on the wall which he faced. Eleven o'clock. Two minutes later than it had been the last time he checked. He rubbed his eyes in a last effort to stay awake then dropped his head back against the chair and closed his eyes.

Suddenly the door opened and a petite girl stepped into the room. Her eyes were brown as was her medium length hair. She leaned over and shook Matt.

His eyes opened slowly at first, then they became wide and clear when he saw the girl. He jumped to his feet, almost knocking her over.

"Honey," she spoke, almost in a whisper, "I'm back. I'm going to stay. I...I can't live without you."

Matt faced her with an uncertain expression on his face. He was afraid to breathe, afraid that any movement would make her change her mind and send her running out of the room.

Then he grabbed her and pulled her close, burying his head against her shoulder. His nostrils filled with the sweet scent of her hair and he lost control of himself. He laughed and pulled her closer. His eyes filled with tears, and he heard a voice he recognized as his own saying, "Oh God, Angel...Oh God."

Matt opened his eyes. Five after eleven. He pulled himself out of his chair, stretched, pulled off his clothes, then walked over to his bed and dropped in.

"Maybe tomorrow," he thought. "Maybe tomorrow." Then he rolled over on his back and stared at the ceiling.

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Ross Stewart

Present are the live
going about business,
thinking not of life.

I would say goodbye
if you really thought I should,
but I wish to stay.

Jan Jerzycki

Funny, laughing clown,
Removes greasepaint and false nose
And walks home alone.

There was a girl who could only say y
Some said this would end in a mess,
They said she would sin,
And never could win,
But she always did, more or less.

* *

DESERT HOLD

Richard Payne

Lay in the soft moonlight
sweet tigress,
the playful cubs now sleep.
You're tired, so rest,
you may sleep.
Worry not for the night-bird's call;
Harm will not enter this garden.

PROPOSITION

Nancy Lockhart

Give your weariness
To me tonight
Let me sooth away the strain
Let's go walking later on
In our jeans and bare feet
I think it's gonna rain

I'll whip up an omelet
And we'll open some wine
Then--we can lay by the fire
If you say you're too tired THEN
I'll know you are a liar

MYOPIA

Nancy Lockhart

In this children's water color world
  of one "demention"
Everything is large and in a line
Softly distorted shapes of green
  form the tree tops
Though the solitary leaf remains obscure

Landscapes here blend into horizons
One learns to cope
  in the absence of detail
A picket fence with no need of pickets
A school bus or a truck?
  might be a train

Hard hats and crowns bear no distinction
There are no letters, numbers
  no need of signs
The county jail looks similar to the chapel
And all the people have
  Orphan Annie eyes

Jan Jerzycki

Exploding passion
Experienced in the night
Gets them through their day.

PEOPLE: STOP

Margie Sallese

I

Today
the sun rose
and with it
all things awakened.
The blades
of grass sharpened themselves,
the wind combed
the willows,
and the whipped cream clouds
drifted
by.
But no one stopped
to notice.
No one stopped
to care.

II

The dusty sun sets
on a well used day.
The door closes
to my room
and the dreamless sleep creeps
into my eyes.
The warm quilts and cool sheets
beckon me
as I join the lovely harmony.

I stop
to notice
how wonderful all things are.
I stop
and ask myself
why don't other people
stop.
People:
stop.

California kid
(Ross Stewart)